

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 04100 241524Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 241430Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2530

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 4100

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, JM

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT REVIEWS EMERGENCY, FINDS IT GOOD

1. SUMMARY: THE JAMAICAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, SPENT PORTIONS OF SEPTEMBER 21 AND 22 IN REVIEWING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. AT THE CONCLUSION OF ITS DEBATE, THE HOUSE APPROVED A MOTION SPONSORED BY THE GOVERNMENT EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SECURITY FORCES AND APPRECIATION FOR THE REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE EMERGENCY. HOWEVER, IT ALSO URGED GREATER CONCERN ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES FOR THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE COURSE OF HIS DISCUSSION OF THE EMERGENCY, NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTER KEBLE MUNN ANNOUNCED THAT 205 PERSONS ARE PRESENTLY HELD IN DETENTIONNN. HE THEN OFFERED ADDITIONAL STATISTICS WHICH DID LITTLE TO CLARIFY ACTION UNDER THE EMERGENCY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE MINISTER NOTED THAT OF THE 446 DETENTION ORDERS ISSUED, 208 PERSONS HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH CRIMES. HE THEN EXPLAINED THE DISPOSITIONS OF THE CHARGES

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PAGE 02 KINGST 04100 241524Z

AGAINST THE 208 -- 17 CONVICTED OF CRIMES, 13

"RELEASED", 42 "STILL IN DETENTION" AND 136 WITH CASES STILL PENDING -- BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO EXPLAIN THE REMAINING 238 ORDERS OR WHERE THE 205 DETENUS FIT INTO THIS SET OF FIGURES.

3. THE MINISTER WAS ALSO CAVALIER WITH FIGURES AS HE ASSERTED A SHARP DROP IN THE INCIDENCE OF CRIME FOLLOWING IMPOSITION OF THE EMERGENCY. COMMENTING ON MURDER, HE COMPARED APRIL 26-MAY 23 (42 INSTANCES) WITH AUGUST 16-SEPTEMBER 12 (11 INSTANCES); TURNING TO RAPE, HE CONTRASTED MARCH 1-28 (42) TO AUGUST 16-SEPTEMBER 12 (11); SHOOTING WERE AVERAGED MONTHLY FROM MARCH 29 TO JUNE 20 (56 "MONTHLY") AND FROM JUNE 31 (SIC) TO SEPTEMBER 12 (32 PER MONTH). TURNING TO ARSON, THE MINISTER COMPARED MARCH 29-MAY 25 (10 INSTANCES) WITH JUNE 21-SEPTEMBER 12 (NONE); ARMED ROBBERY WAS CONTRASTED BETWEEN MARCH 29-MAY 25 (180 CASES) AND AUGUST 16-SEPTEMBER 21 (66).

4. THE DEBATE WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S AGREEMENT TO AMEND THE MOTION OF APPROVAL. THE AMENDMENT, PROPOSED BY INDEPENDENT MP ROBERT LIGHTBOURNE, CAUTIONED THE SECURITY FORCES AGAINST USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE AND URGED THAT THEY TAKE ALL POSSIBLE EFFORTS TO PROTECT INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. THE GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE AMENDMENT DOUBTLESS STEMS NOT ONLY FROM ITS OWN DESIRE TO BE FOUND ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS BUT FROM REAL NEED. IT HAS GROWN INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE SECURITY FORCES, INCREASINGLY WEARY AFTER THREE MONTHS OF IMPLEMENTING THE EMERGENCY, HAVE BEGUN TO DISPLAY OCCASIONAL LAPSES OF RESTRAINT. ROY MCNEILL, SPOKESMAN FOR THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (LJP) NOTED IN THE DEBATE THAT BETWEEN JUNE 19 AND AND SEPTEMBER 6, 41 PERSONS HAD BEEN SHOT, 33 OF THEM FATALLY, BY THE SECURITY FORCES. MOREOVER, THERE ARE FREQUENT ACCOUNTS IN THE PRESS, OFTEN BASED ON OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASES FROM THE JOINT POLICE/MILITARY COMMAND, WHICH TELL OF MISCONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 KINGST 04100 241524Z

CREANTS BEING SHOT AS THEY "ATTACK" MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES. THE SUSPICION IN THE MIND OF THE PUBLIC IS THAT THE SECURITY FORCES ARE DEALING OUT ROUGH, SWIFT JUSTICE; OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE HAS BEEN TOLD BY MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES THAT THESE SUSPICIONS HAVE SOME BASIS IN FACT. THUS, THE GOVERNMENT'S ACQUIESCENCE IN LIGHTBOURNE'S AMENDMENT DISPLAYS ITS OWN SENSITIVITY TO GROWING

PUBLIC CONCERN OVER INFRINGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS--
MOST PARTICULARLY THE RIGHT OF LIFE.

5. WHILE MINISTER MUNN SOUGHT DURING THE DEBATE TO
MAKE MUCH OF THE DECLINE IN VIOLENCE SINCE THE
IMPOSITION OF THE EMERGENCY, HE WAS COMPELLED TO
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE NUMBER OF SHOOTINGS HAD BEGUN
TO INCREASE. IT IS PERHAPS TOO EARLY TO DETERMINE
WHETHER THESE INSTANCES OF VIOLENCE SIMPLY REPRESENT
DIMINISHED AWE OF THE SECURITY FORCES OR WHETHER
THEY ARE SOMETHING MORE. THE FACT OF THE MATTER
IS, HOWEVER, THAT THEY ARE DEMONSTRABLE. THE NEWS-
PAPERS THIS MORNING BANNER THE SHOOTING OF THREE
WOMEN BY GUNMEN. YESTERDAY SECURITY FORCES WERE
IN FRONT OF THE EMBASSY ENDEAVORING TO APPREHEND
SIX GUNMEN WHO HAD SUGHT TO AKE A PAYROLL AS IT
LEFT A NEIGHBORING BANK.
GERARD

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